

## CHUCK COLSON AND ROME

Updated April 18, 2007 (first published October 14, 2002) (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, [fbns@wayoflife.org](mailto:fbns@wayoflife.org); for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) –

Chuck Colson, popular evangelical author and founder of Prison Fellowship, is entirely given over to ecumenical relationships with Rome. Colson is a Southern Baptist but his wife is a practicing Roman Catholic (who teaches Sunday School in a Southern Baptist church), and he attends Mass with her at times.

More than 70 percent of Colson's Prison Fellowship chaplains are Roman Catholic (*Calvary Contender*, Nov. 15, 1999).

In February 1977 Colson told the 35th annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals:

"I'm not certain that I have any convictions other than one, that [we must end] ... the divisions which have separated the believers historically and have weakened the impact of Christianity on 20th Century America. ... You know, I am in a very ecumenical position. I'm an Episcopalian. I love to go to Baptist churches nearby, particularly one Baptist church where the pastor is on the board of Prison Fellowship Foundation. My wife was Roman Catholic when I was converted, and she's remained in her church, organizing a little Bible study. ... we must seek a fresh unity of spirit and A HEALING OF THE DIVISIONS which many historians write has crippled the impact of Christianity..."

Another example of Colson's ecumenical activities was the Catholic-Charismatic renewal meeting he attended in 1979, in New York, which featured a Marxist priest, a Mass celebrated by Cardinal Cooke, and a healing service led by Ruth Carter Stapleton (*Christian Beacon*, Sept. 27, 1979).

Colson has only grown more ecumenical through the years. Colson wrote the foreword to Catholic Keith Fournier's deceptive book *Evangelical Catholics*, published in 1990. Consider an excerpt from Colson's foreword:

A few years ago I was invited to Franciscan University of Steubenville [a Roman Catholic institution], in Ohio, to receive the Poverello award. ...

But at root, **those who are called of God, whether Catholic or Protestant, are part of the same Body.** What they share is a belief in the basics: the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, His bodily resurrection, His imminent return, and the authority of His infallible Word. They also share the same mission: presenting Christ as Savior and Lord to a needy world. Those who hold to these truths and act on this commission are Evangelical Christians.

... **It's high time that all of us who are Christians come together regardless of the difference of our confessions and our traditions** and make common cause to bring Christian values to bear in our society. When the barbarians are scaling the walls, there is no time for petty quarreling in the camp. ... We have much to forgive, much to relearn. But *Evangelical Catholics* can help us do both so we can band together against the rising tides of secularism which threaten to engulf us.

My friends, the only way to label a Catholic an Evangelical is to change the historical definition of both terms. The declarations of its councils, such as Trent and Vatican II, leave no doubt of this. **Secularism cannot be defeated with a disobedient alliance between true and false Christianity.**

“In his 1993 book, *The Body*, Colson calls on Evangelicals to join forces with Catholics and Charismatics in the ‘common cause to combat cultural relativism.’ He says, ‘The body of Christ, in all its diversity, is created with Baptist feet, Charismatic hands, and Catholic ears--all with their eyes on Jesus.’ Colson, ever ecumenical, praises the Catholic chain of command, and includes the Catholic Church as part of the body of Christ. The book was endorsed by Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Carl F. Henry, and Catholic priest Richard John Neuhaus; a July 19, 1993, *Christianity Today* advertisement carried endorsements from Roman Catholic Cardinal John O’Connor, neo-evangelicals J.I. Packer and Kenneth Kantzer” (*The BDM Letter*, September 1993).

On March 29, 1994, Colson joined Catholic priest Richard John Neuhaus and nine Protestants and Roman Catholics as originators of a 25-page statement called “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium.” Some 40 other Christian leaders signed the statement. It called for common cause between Evangelicals and Catholics in social tasks and evangelistic commitment and against the forces of secularism. The document stated: “We together, Evangelicals and Catholics, confess our sins against the unity that Christ intends for all his disciples.” In an interview, Colson stated: “We have differences [Protestants and Catholics], but on the ancient creeds and the core beliefs of Christianity we stand together. Christianity is besieged on all sides--by a militant nation of Islam, by pantheists who have invaded many areas of life through the New Age Movement, and by aggressive secularism of Western life.” Colson and his fellow ecumenists claim that the Roman Catholic Church agrees with Protestant and Baptist Christians on the “core beliefs.” That simply is not true. One of the most crucial of all core beliefs is the gospel, and Rome defines the gospel differently than Bible-believing churches. Colson’s statement sounds logical and reasonable, but it is contrary to the Bible. God’s Word does not allow believers to yoke together with false religionists for any purpose.

In an article in the Religious News Service (October 16, 1995), Colson described his October meeting with the Pope in New York City. He depicted the Pope as a great moral leader and a friend of biblical orthodoxy. Consider an excerpt:

"As one of the evangelicals present, I left with one conclusion: Those who defend eternal moral truths and Christian orthodoxy have taken their stand on common ground. The pope made it quite clear that he fully supports those of all persuasions who recognize, and work to counter, the enormous problems resulting from our society's flight from the truths of orthodoxy. When my eyes met the pope's, we stared across centuries of distrust and

suspicion and found common ground. ... Orthodoxy is nothing less than that thread that connects the present to the past and the past to the future--and that is the thing that really bothers our adversaries."

Colson's blindness is incredible. Only biblical prophecies of last-day apostasy can explain such blindness. The Pope of Rome, a defender of Christian orthodoxy! Why, everything he stands for uniquely as the Pope is contrary to the Bible. He claims to be the head of all the churches. He claims to be able to turn the bread and juice of the Lord's Supper into the very body and blood of Christ. He claims to be a spiritual father to all Christians. He claims, as a priest, to mediate between God and men. He claims to be able to influence the eternal destinies of men through his unscriptural sacraments. He claims that Mary is the Mother of God. He prays to her and adores her, and he thanked her for saving him when an assassin's bullet almost ended his life. He has "all yours" embroidered on his garments, and he admits that it refers to Mary. He claims that the blood of Christ was not sufficient to give men eternal life but that they also need Roman masses and baptisms and other rituals. In fact, he claims that even all of this might not be sufficient, and that even "the faithful" might have to go to a place called purgatory where their sins will finally be expunged.

The last statement we cited by Colson is telling. Colson claims that he has found common ground with Roman Catholicism. This is not because Romanism has changed, but it is because he himself represents an apostate form of Christianity known as modern evangelicalism which is so nonchalant about the truth that it cannot resist error. Colson says orthodoxy is the thread that connects the present with the past and the future. Not so. In relation to the Pope, it is not orthodoxy which connects the past and the future, but heresy. John Paul II represents ancient heresies which were affirmed by the anathemas of Trent; at the same time he represents that final apostate Mother of Harlots foretold in Revelation 17. Those who yoke together with the Pope are yoked together with his blasphemies and heresies. The Bible warns of this: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

Colson spoke at the Promise Keepers conference in Memphis in 1996. His topic was "The Unity of the Body: Brothers United in Christ." He contended that division is a sin and said, "Shame on us when we're divided." He said that when Christians aren't one, they are working against God. He said Christians need to reach across denominational lines, that whatever the denomination, Catholic, etc., Christians belong to Jesus and to each other. He said he was proud that Mother Teresa was his sister in Christ (*Calvary Contender*, November 15, 1996).

In early 1998, Colson's Prison Fellowship honored Roman Catholic priest Richard John Neuhaus with the Wilberforce Award.

Also in 1998 Roman Catholic Michael Timmis was named chairman of Prison Fellowship. Founder Chuck Colson remains on the board as Chairman Emeritus. Timmis has served on the Promise Keepers board of directors and spoke at the massive Promise Keepers rally in Washington D.C. in October 1997.

In October 1998 Colson spoke at Calvin College chapel in a forum co-sponsored by Calvin Seminary and the Acton Institute (Roman Catholic). The subject was “Over One Hundred Years of Christian Social Teaching: The Legacy of Abraham Kuyper and [Pope] Leo XII.” Roman Catholic priests greeted those in attendance. “Colson came to the platform to rousing applause and began his lecture by commending the seminary for a conference that brought together Calvinists and Catholics on the eve of celebrating the Reformation. Relating the 1994 release of *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (ECT), Colson said the message of the document was ‘something I believe in very deeply.’ He went on to commend the pope, saying John Paul II, a man he called the ‘Holy Father,’ would be known as ‘John Paul the Great,’ and he thanked the pope for his positive movement in bringing social change. To be a fundamentalist or a separatist, which includes not engaging contemporary culture with the Bible, Colson said, is the ‘greatest sin.’ After thirty years of cultural autonomy and its dismal failure, Colson argued that it is time to identify with John Paul II and his statement that the new millennium will be a ‘springtime of the Christian faith.’ Evangelicals and Catholics together, according to Colson, have a historic opportunity upon the demise of humanism to join ranks and create a driving force for implementing world change” (*Chuck Colson: General Teachings*, Biblical Discernment Ministries, citing *The Trinity Review*, March 1999).

In November 2000, Charles Colson and James Dobson participated in a conference in Rome hosted by the pope’s Pontifical Council for the Family and by the Acton Institute, a Roman Catholic organization based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. “After the sessions, both Colson and Dobson made statements that were used by Roman Catholic publicists to promote the harlot ecumenical cause” (*Fundamentalist Digest*, Jan.-Feb. 2002, citing *The National Catholic Register*, Dec. 17-23, 2000 and *Calvary Contender*, Jan. 1, 2001). Dobson and Colson also met with Pope John Paul II. The *Colorado Springs Gazette* (Dec. 9, 2000) noted that the personal meeting between the pope, Colson and Dobson was a “special moment” because Evangelicals and Catholics have disagreed with one another for centuries concerning the role and infallibility of the pope. One conference participant, Robert Sirico, a Catholic priest and president of the Acton Institute, said that Vatican officials “could not recall a similar meeting involving such high-level evangelical Protestants taking place at the Vatican.” According to the *Gazette*, the Catholic News Service reported that Dobson praised the Catholic church for its efforts to protect the family and said that while he has some theological differences with the Roman Catholic Church, he often agrees more with the Roman Catholic Church than with other Evangelicals on issues such as abortion, premarital sex and homosexuality (*Foundation* magazine, Jan.-Feb. 2001).

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